

National Weather Service Winter Weather Products

Forecasts

Twice or more daily, the National Weather Service in Flagstaff publishes 7-day forecasts for much of northern Arizona. These forecasts provide a general overview of the weather for planning purposes.

Hazardous Weather Outlooks

When the possibility of hazardous weather exists, including winter storms, a Hazardous Weather Outlook is issued to discuss these hazards.

Winter Weather Advisories

A Winter Weather Advisory is issued when less serious winter weather is imminent or occurring. Keep in mind that many automobile accidents occur when an inch or less of snow has accumulated on roadways.

Winter Storm Watches

A Winter Storm Watch is issued when conditions appear favorable for the development of intense, long-lasting winter weather. Winter Storm Watches are normally issued 24 to 36 hours in advance of a potential storm. This is the time to prepare. Check that winter storm survival kits for home and automobile are in order. Be alert for forecast updates.

Winter Storm Warnings

A Winter Storm Warning is issued when life threatening conditions are imminent or occurring. Anyone in the warned area should take immediate precautions to protect life and property. Avoid travel if possible.

How to Get Winter Weather Products

The National Weather Service disseminates weather information through the internet, weather radio, and telephone. See the back cover of this pamphlet for more details.



Providing weather forecasts and warnings for the protection of life, property, and the enhancement of the national economy.

Sources for additional information

- NWS Flagstaff webpage: weather.gov/flagstaff
- NOAA Weather Radio: Receivers available at many electronics stores. Frequency of 162.400 MHz for Flagstaff. Other frequencies for Arizona listed at: www.wr.noaa.gov/fgz/office/nwr-freq.php?wfo=fgz
- Recorded Weather Message for Flagstaff and surrounding area: (928) 774-3301
- Winter Weather Awareness materials: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter>

Other sources:

- Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) www.azdot.gov/CCPartnerships/KnowSnow/index.asp
- ADOT road conditions: 511 or (888) 411-ROAD

NOAA's National Weather Service
Flagstaff Weather Forecast Office
P.O. Box 16057
Bellemont, AZ 86015-6057
<http://weather.gov/flagstaff>
(928) 556-9161

Northern Arizona Winter Storms Facts & Preparedness



Photo Michael Staudenmaier

**Provided by the National
Weather Service, Flagstaff, AZ**

**Your official local source for
accurate and timely weather
warnings and forecasts.**

Visit our website at:

weather.gov/flagstaff

Winter Storm Facts

Few people realize that Arizona has 3 times the national average, per capita, for fatalities in winter weather. One winter storm from December 13 to 20, 1967 left Flagstaff buried in over 7 feet of snow. Another storm moved into Prescott January 10, 1930, and by the time it ended January 13, over 3 feet of snow had fallen at just 5,200 feet elevation. Since the beginning of weather records in 1898, Flagstaff has experienced over 30 storms producing more than 25 inches of snow. The region deserves a stronger reputation for winter weather!

Any amount of snow or ice on roadways creates dangerous driving conditions, speed makes it worse.

Travel is especially dangerous during winter weather. Even small amounts of snow can become hazardous. Intense snow showers, especially with blowing snow, can produce near zero visibility while creating slick road surfaces. Roadways can go from safe to treacherous in a matter of seconds. On March 16, 2008, a brief but heavy snow shower on Interstate-40 west of Flagstaff resulted in a 139 vehicle pile-up which injured 53 and killed 2 individuals. Little more than 1 inch of snow had fallen at the time of the accident.

March 16, 2008 pile-up on Interstate 40 near Flagstaff, AZ



Photo courtesy Arizona Daily Sun

Winter Weather Preparedness

In Vehicles:

- **Avoid driving in winter weather if possible**
- **Fully check and winterize your vehicle**
- **Carry a winter storm survival kit:**
 - Mobile phone, charger, batteries
 - Blankets/sleeping bags
 - Flashlight with extra batteries
 - First-aid kit
 - Knife
 - Extra food and bottled water
 - Extra clothing to keep dry
 - Tissues and paper towels
 - Matches to melt snow for drinking water
 - Sack of sand or cat litter for traction
 - Shovel
 - Windshield scraper and brush
 - Tool kit, jumper cable and tow rope
 - Water container
 - Compass and road maps
- **Fill your gas tank before traveling**
- **Don't travel alone if possible**
- **Let someone know your timetable and route**
- **Occasionally run the engine and heater for warmth if stranded.** Be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow. Slightly open a window.

At Home and Work:

The main concerns are loss of heat, power, and telephone service, and shortage of supplies if storm conditions last for more than a day. Have available:

- **Flashlight and extra batteries**
- **Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio** and portable radio to receive emergency information
- **Extra food and water.**
- **Extra medicine and baby items**
- **First-aid supplies**
- **Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter**

Winter Weather Definitions

- **Blizzard:** Winds of 35 mph or greater reducing visibility below 1/4 mile for 3 or more hours.
- **Blowing Snow:** Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility. Blowing snow may be falling snow or snow on the ground picked up by the wind.
- **Snow:** Snow falling at a steady rate. Accumulation is likely.
- **Snow Showers:** Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.
- **Snow Flurries:** Light snow falling for short durations with little or no accumulation.

Dangers of Winter Weather

- **Frostbite:** damages skin and tissue by freezing. The most susceptible areas are fingers, toes and ears.
- **Hypothermia:** occurs when the body temperature drops to less than 95 °F. Hypothermia can be fatal. Wear a coat and/or clothes in layers to stay warm. Cover your head, a significant portion of body heat can be lost from the head. Keep moving to stay warm.

Vehicle accidents account for 70% of injuries due to ice and snow.

- **Avalanches:** Rapid accumulation of snow can result in tons of snow tumbling downhill at speeds up to 200 mph. Anyone caught in an avalanche is at risk of death.
- **Fires and asphyxiation:** occur due to use of emergency heat sources. Use and ventilate fireplaces and space heaters properly in order to prevent fires and the buildup of toxic fumes.



Photo Michael Staudenmaier